United Nations A/C.3/72/SR.4

General Assembly
Seventy-second session

Official Records

Distr.: General
23 October 2017

Original: English

Third Committee

Summary record of the 4th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 3 October 2017, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Mr. Idris (Vice-Chair) ..... (Eritrea)

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In the absence of Mr. Gunnarsson (Iceland), Mr. Idris (Eritrea), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 27: Social development (*continued*) (A/72/169)

(a) Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly (*continued*) (A/72/158 and A/72/211)

(b) Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family (*continued*) (A/72/159, A/72/161, A/72/166, A/72/189 and A/72/190)

1. **Mr. Moussa** (Djibouti) said that his Government prioritized social development to ensure greater prosperity and social cohesion. A number of measures had been implemented to protect and support young people in their transition to adulthood and facilitate their social and economic inclusion on an equal basis. Moreover, existing measures were being expanded to ensure that all young people had access to formal and vocational education, regardless of their education background, so as to acquire the necessary skills for their social and professional integration. Young people participated in the implementation of social policies at various levels. In February 2017, youth, youth organizations, civil society, government representatives and other partners had participated in an event to outline a clear strategy for the development of programmes that targeted the needs of young people.

2. Social protection policies and extended social safety nets were key strategies to reducing poverty. The national social protection policy, implemented in 2013, contained measures to directly support purchasing power and household revenue for the poorest individuals working in the informal sector. As a result, there had been improvements in productivity, productive capacity and early childhood development within those households. Given that the majority of the population was not formally covered by the social security system, the Government was working to better target households in need and coordinate assistance programmes. In addition, the Government had established a housing policy framework, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals, to strengthen tenure security and ensure access to decent housing. In response to the recurring drought, clear strategies were being developed to strengthen all forms of resilience. Programmes for food security and social safety nets targeting the poorest individuals had actively contributed to reducing vulnerability and ensuring sustainable development. The Government recognized that the family was the main contributor to social development.

3. **Ms. Khaled** (Bangladesh) said that the international community must evaluate the progress made in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and follow up on its commitments pursuant to the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030. In that regard, the Government of Bangladesh had continued to prioritize the empowerment of its people in its development plan with a view to eradicating poverty. Robust economic growth had been complemented by improvements in several social indicators. The Government had implemented social protection systems to address exclusion, poverty and inequality, and social development programmes had been aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals. As a result, the number of people living below the poverty line had been reduced by almost 80 per cent since the 1990s, to 12.9 per cent.

4. The national development strategy focused on addressing inequality through social security, decent work and financial inclusion. Over 13 per cent of the national budget, 2.3 per cent of gross domestic product, was allocated to social safety net spending. Significant investments were being made in human resources development, especially for youth, in order to take advantage of the demographic dividend and promote digitalization. The strategy was being aligned to 20 youth-specific targets in the Sustainable Development Goals in an effort to provide quality education and training, reduce unemployment, promote social awareness and ensure sustainable livelihoods.

5. By 2050, Bangladesh would be facing the challenges of an ageing population. In anticipation, the Government had embraced the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing. With consideration for the well-being of the ageing population, it had implemented social safety net programmes and increased the age of retirement from 57 to 59. The rights and fundamental freedoms of persons with disabilities were also a priority, and measures had been taken to ensure that persons with disabilities were respected and enjoyed full participation, equal rights and opportunities. Disability had been mainstreamed in development policies and programmes.

6. **Mr. Ben Mejdoub** (Morocco), speaking as a youth delegate, said that youth in Morocco were eager to be

involved in the development of the country. Morocco had called for the active involvement of youth in the work of the General Assembly and honoured its commitment by including young people in its official delegation, thereby acknowledging the key role that they played in society, the economy and politics, as well as their impact on decision-making. Governments, civil society, non-governmental organizations and the private sector must work together to guarantee a favourable environment for youth development, including equal opportunities, better access to quality education and higher standards of living.

7. **Ms. Mehadji** (Morocco), speaking as a youth delegate, said that poverty and economic disparities, both within and among States, intolerance and a lack of cultural diversity undermined implementation of the 2030 Agenda. As agents of social evolution who could contribute greatly to development, young people should be at the centre of every national development project. In Morocco, the Government had established social and educational institutions and training centres for young people, sports facilities, libraries and spaces dedicated to new technologies. Additionally, a national human development initiative had been launched in 2005 to promote the well-being of vulnerable groups, including youth. The national youth strategy 2015-2030 targeted strategic goals for youth development in partnership with three national youth institutions, and the Union of Young African Parliamentarians had been created in 2014 to encourage youth involvement in building a strong Africa.

8. **Ms. Rixhon** (Luxembourg), speaking as a youth delegate, said that young people had been compelled to stand up for their future in the face of global events, such as rising populism and the vote by the United Kingdom to leave the European Union. While young people largely rejected the future proposed by extremists, some could find answers to their frustrations in radical ideologies that corrupted religions and cultures. Luxembourg and other States members of the European Union had too long believed that those issues did not apply to them. However, the majority of recent terrorist attacks within the European Union had not been committed by foreign nationals or refugees, but rather by young marginalized Europeans who had been neglected by society. Youth under the age of 30 represented half of the world population. The international community must therefore empower them through intergenerational dialogue, which would require a multilateral response.

9. **Mr. Lohr** (Luxembourg), speaking as a youth delegate, said that, while the United Nations and other international organizations recognized the transformative impact of youth in society, some States had not yet done so. Despite making up half of the global population, young people were too often marginalized, and two thirds of States did not consult youth on poverty reduction strategies or national development plans. States must therefore challenge their way of thinking and encourage youth participation in order to further development, peace and conflict prevention. It was essential for young people to enjoy a political space in which they could participate and express themselves. Those who felt marginalized or excluded from society were targeted by terrorist groups and often found refuge in radical ideologies that offered a sense of social inclusion. Nearly half of the population of Luxembourg was made up of foreign nationals who coexisted in harmony, enriched the culture and contributed to the economy. The international community must face the challenges of multiculturalism and pluralistic societies in a similar spirit and translate ideas into action.

10. **Mr. Ulvr** and **Ms. Sykorova** (Czechia), speaking as youth delegates, said that, as members of the first generation of young people who had been born into a free, democratic Czech Republic, they felt obliged to continue in the tradition of those who had fought for their freedoms and to build on their society's respect for human rights. The international community must create a space that would enable young people to express their opinions without the bias of ageism; provide young women with more opportunities for political engagement; and allow access to quality, inclusive education, practical training and paid internships for all in an environment of acknowledgement and respect for the contributions of young people. The systematic involvement of youth, youth organizations and civil society was essential to sustainable development. Young people must therefore be included in decision-making processes and the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of development strategies. Additional efforts should be made to encourage the participation of vulnerable and marginalized youth groups. As for the General Assembly resolution on youth, it should be ambitious and serve as a basis for policies to promote measures such as school and youth parliaments, youth boards and councils, participatory budgeting and co-management practices with a view to teaching young people about democracy.

11. **Mr. Shingiro** (Burundi) said that his Government prioritized reducing poverty and combating social exclusion, especially for vulnerable groups. Burundi had ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol in 2014 and had drafted a national policy to guide its implementation within an inclusive sustainable development

framework. Additionally, a bill currently before Parliament proposed regulations governing the treatment of persons with disabilities.

12. Despite its limited resources, the Government had always protected vulnerable groups and had signed the relevant national, regional and international instruments. In addition, it had implemented a social protection policy to mainstream their needs within the 2025 development plan and the strategic framework for growth and poverty reduction, which were based on the principle of equitable sustainable development. Youth participation, in particular, was essential to the sustainable development of Burundi, as youth under the age of 25 years constituted more than half of the population. The President therefore intended to create a youth investment bank with a view to promoting creativity and entrepreneurship.

13. Furthermore, primary school enrolment had nearly reached gender parity owing to an initiative that provided free primary education as a means of eliminating obstacles for girls. A measure to provide free health care for women giving birth and children under the age of five had also produced significant results. Despite those achievements, much remained to be done. The Government required assistance from its partners to overcome the challenges relating to dropout rates for girls, increased violence against women and girls, poverty among vulnerable groups and youth unemployment. Regrettably, the unjust and unilateral sanctions imposed on Burundi had harmful consequences on the people, especially vulnerable groups.

14. **Mr. Douti** (Togo) said that all new national development policies and strategies prioritized social development. Following the launch of the Sustainable Development Goals in 2015, Togo had begun to draft a development plan that was consistent with the national strategy for accelerated growth and employment promotion. The plan sought to improve well-being; increase productivity and competitiveness in growing sectors; strengthen infrastructure to support growth; promote sustainable management of land, the environment and the living environment; and strengthen governance and peacebuilding. A community development emergency programme had been launched in 2016 with financial and technical support from the United Nations Development Programme. It was designed to significantly improve living conditions in areas that received little or no basic socioeconomic services while providing an opportunity to promote peace and social stability in Togo.

15. Youth employment and entrepreneurship were also priorities for sustainable socioeconomic development. The Government had established several programmes and operational frameworks to benefit young people through job creation, support for economic initiatives, basic development, volunteerism and employment in promising sectors. In addition, the national inclusive finance fund allowed vulnerable groups to access interest-free loans to undertake income-generating activities, thereby sustainably improving basic living conditions. The new national health development plan, which was aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals, sought to promote effective governance in health care and pharmaceutical production. Furthermore, significant reforms in agriculture had generated decent employment for youth under the national programme for food security and agricultural investment. They had also contributed to reducing malnutrition by one third between 2012 and 2015. The Government was committed to promoting the construction of decent, accessible and affordable housing and planned to construct 5,000 homes for low-income households per year until 2020. Between 2011 and 2015, the poverty rate had dropped from 58.7 per cent to 55.1 per cent, and access to basic social services had considerably improved.

16. **Mr. Almabruk** (Libya) said that the inequality between developing States and rich States had had a negative impact on economic development. Despite optimistic forecasts, growth rates had remained low, and financing programmes were insufficient. Developing countries required aid to build the necessary infrastructure in productive sectors in order to promote job creation and reduce income inequality. In Libya, which was undergoing a period of transition, the current political insecurity and instability had severely hindered development. Despite those challenges, efforts were made to enforce laws for the protection of families, children and the elderly, and to provide social security assistance for education, decent housing and health care. In an effort to overcome inequality, the salary of Government employees had been increased. Furthermore, educational opportunities and school supplies were provided for the children of displaced persons. The Government encouraged youth participation in development and had established an institution to support the reintegration of veterans. However, many challenges remained, especially in the provision of health care.

17. **Ms. Halvorsen** (Denmark), speaking as a youth delegate, said that the Sustainable Development Goals could be viewed as a contract between generations, reflecting the world that young people should see in

2030. Young people must therefore be active participants in the development process. In Denmark, the national strategy for development cooperation and humanitarian action prioritized youth. The number of youth delegates had been increased, a global youth advisor position had been created in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the grant to the Danish youth council had been increased.

18. States must incorporate youth issues across existing development agendas rather than employ a silo approach. To that end, the Danish youth council could serve as an example. Through the council, Danish youth organizations undertook development cooperation initiatives to create partnerships with international youth organizations in order to design, implement and evaluate development projects. For example, Danish medical students were working with their peers in Uganda to promote awareness on non-communicable diseases; Danish scouts were working in Tunisia to strengthen democracy; and a Danish political youth group was partnering with a non-governmental youth organization in Zimbabwe to promote peace. Those types of partnerships created strong and responsible young people. Rather than being seen as the problem, young people must be consulted and involved in development so that they could be part of the solution.

19. **Ms. Klein** (Madagascar) said that social development, specifically poverty reduction, was prioritized in the national development programme. In 2015, the Government had established a social protection programme to improve living conditions, especially for vulnerable groups, which included retirement plans, insurance plans, pension funds, access to basic social services and social assistance benefits for the poor.

20. Madagascar was committed to the African Union roadmap on harnessing the demographic dividend through investments in youth and was also making efforts to support youth in the context of the International Organization of la Francophonie. Young people represented 61 per cent of the Malagasy population and were at the centre of government efforts to promote youth employment, health and education. A strong and ambitious national youth policy had been adopted in 2016. With assistance from the United Nations Population Fund and other partners, the Government had implemented significant measures to assist youth in gaining access to information, services and training regarding family planning, HIV/AIDS and education. The sexual and reproductive health of young people and the high prevalence of early pregnancies and marriage were also major challenges for Madagascar. A law had been adopted in June 2017 to provide universal access to family planning, and a sex education programme had been introduced in schools. To combat youth unemployment, a national policy for employment, technical education and vocational training had been implemented, under which the Association of Malagasy Economic Stakeholders had adopted a youth entrepreneurial strategy.

21. In 2015, Madagascar had ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and had taken steps to ensure that persons with disabilities could exercise their rights to education and health services. The Government had conducted a population and housing census in 2017, which was an important step in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, as an understanding of the real needs of the population was essential to combating poverty and promoting development.

22. **Mr. Zambrana** (Plurinational State of Bolivia) said that, despite the commitments made by States under various international instruments to combat inequality, promote social progress and increase the standard of living for all, social gaps were growing quickly. In Bolivia, however, programmes introduced in recent years by the Government of President Evo Morales had supported development and reduced poverty. The social and economic development plan 2016-2020, along with the 2030 Agenda, focused on extreme poverty eradication, universal access to basic social services and sovereignty over natural resources. The Government had nationalized the hydrocarbon sector and used oil revenues to build roads, schools, hospitals, sports centres and other facilities. In addition, recent public policies had focused on reducing inequalities, especially for vulnerable groups. As a result, 1.6 million people had been lifted out of extreme poverty between 2005 and 2016. Furthermore, the Government had invested 117.5 million bolivianos in programmes to guarantee the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities. In 2014, it had adopted a new code for the protection of children and youth based on international instruments as well as an analysis of the challenges facing the country's children.

23. The international community had just 13 years to meet the Sustainable Development Goals. If it truly wished to resolve the challenges of socioeconomic inequality and represent the interests of the people, it must recognize access to basic services as a human right; acknowledge the rights of Mother Earth; and combat capitalism, colonialism and imperialism.

24. **Mr. Cassidy** (International Labour Organization (ILO)) said that shared prosperity, through an inclusive and equitable distribution of the benefits of economic

growth, was essential to poverty reduction. The absence of decent work opportunities for the billions of people struggling to survive was a root cause of many challenges, including migration, trade and action on climate change, as well as preparing youth for the future. In the long term, the international community must make greater concerted efforts to address the drag on social and economic development, which included growing inequalities, widespread stagnation in wages, continued high unemployment in many States, the lack of protection for workers in a growing informal economy and the marginalization of people through social exclusion. The ability of States to provide decent work for all was affected by changes in the world of work, driven largely by structural economic shifts, the changing nature of production and employment, technological progress, the impacts of climate change and new sociopolitical and demographic trends. States must therefore prepare for a new future of work in which economic growth went hand in hand with social progress.

25. In anticipation of those challenges, ILO had formed a number of partnerships to bring together the expertise and experience of a wide range of stakeholders. In September 2017, it had established a high-level Global Commission on the Future of Work to undertake an in-depth examination of the future of work that would provide the analytical basis for social justice initiatives in the twenty-first century. Well-designed social protection systems, when properly implemented, could enhance human capital and productivity, eradicate poverty, reduce inequalities and contribute to establishing social peace. Universal coverage and access to social protection was therefore essential. In 2016, ILO and the World Bank had launched the Global Partnership for Universal Social Protection. ILO looked forward to engaging with Member States in partnerships driven by better research and statistics, which would be crucial in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Statements made in exercise of the right of reply

26. **Ms. Likina** (Russian Federation) said that her delegation was compelled to respond to the statements made by the representative of Georgia at the second meeting of the Committee and by the representative of Ukraine at the third meeting. It was highly regrettable that the present forum had been used to advance fabricated claims against the Russian Federation that were a gross distortion of events. Those statements were clearly an attempt to deny responsibility for the decisions made by the Governments of Georgia and Ukraine, which had played a fateful role in the lives of thousands and had had tragic repercussions. She called upon those representatives to avoid deliberately politicizing the matter in future.

27. **Mr. Tumasyan** (Georgia), speaking as a youth delegate, said that the Russian Federation persisted in its policy of violating the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia by breaching the United Nations Charter, the norms and principles of international law, the 12 August 2008 ceasefire agreement and all Security Council resolutions pertaining to Georgia. In 2008, the Russian Federation had carried out open military aggression against Georgia and committed ethnic cleansing. It continued to occupy 20 per cent of the territory of Georgia, and its violations were duly documented by international organizations. The Russian Federation must begin to fulfil its obligations under international law and the 2008 ceasefire agreement and allow internally displaced persons and refugees to return safely to their places of origin.

28. **Ms. Horbachova** (Ukraine) said that the scale of internationally wrongful acts and offences committed by the Russian Federation demonstrated a blatant breach of its obligations under international law, in particular the Hague and Geneva Conventions, United Nations treaties and General Assembly resolutions 68/262 and 71/205. The latter had recognized the Russian Federation as an occupying Power.

29. Up to 60,000 former Crimean residents had been internally displaced to the mainland of Ukraine. Moreover, education in the Ukrainian language was facing a dire situation in Crimea. Between 2013 and 2017, the number of students receiving instruction in Ukrainian had dropped dramatically, from almost 13,000 to 370, and Ukrainian had been removed as a language of instruction in universities. Those restrictions continued, despite the order issued on 19 April 2017 by the International Court of Justice, which had concluded unanimously that the Russian Federation must ensure the viability of education in Ukrainian.

30. Since the occupation had begun in 2014, the mortality rate on the Crimean Peninsula had increased constantly, at an average of 13 per cent, while it had declined in other regions of Ukraine. That fact was well known to Russian occupation authorities, who, nevertheless, continued to transform Crimea from a tourist destination into a massive military base, causing harm to both the environment and the social situation.

The meeting rose at 4.15 p.m.